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First Commencement and Inauguration Address

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GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY
FIRST COMMENCEMENT AND INAUGURATION
June 25, 1972

WILLIAM E. ENGBRETSON, PRESIDENT

File

ACCEPTANCE

Thank you Mr. Phalin. I accept the Presidency of Governors State University with a sense of humility, responsibility, and enthusiasm. I am confident that with the support, assistance, and encouragement of students, faculty, citizens and friends, Governors State University will use its challenging beginning as a sound base upon which to build an even more distinguished future.

It is accepted with the full knowledge that this new university could not exist nor operate without the fine measure of support and cooperation it has already received. Everybody here has given of themselves to make this day possible. For all of you, our deepest thanks.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Ladies and Gentlemen. It is probably another measure of Governors State University's uniqueness that the President gets inaugurated three years and nine days after arriving on the job. When I arrived here, Chancellor emeritus Herman Wells of Indiana University said, "Bill, you've got the best job in Higher Education in the country - no faculty, no students and no buildings; keep it that way as long as you can." So we opened two years earlier than originally planned. These three years have been eminently challenging and rewarding. They have been fascinating, frustrating, growth-provoking, almost overwhelmingly exciting years. A friend of mine recently said, "What are college and university presidents? They're those people who don't stay in their jobs so long nowadays...but it feels twice as long." The Chancellor of the University of Denver talked this week about his first five years on the job saying that it ages you rapidly. He now understands what his father meant when he said, "You're getting old when it takes you longer to get rested than it takes you to get tired."

Twenty years ago one of my elementary school girls described her feelings in a beautiful child-like way saying, "Sometimes I feel a piece of sad and sometimes I feel a piece of glad." That best describes my feelings for and with all of you today. "A piece of sad, a piece of glad." Commencement is like that. Sadness at the parting of our first students; gladness, both at the completion of our first year, and the shared joy with graduates at the completion of academic programs and degrees.

My sincerest compliments to you first Governors State University graduates. In the foreseeable future a hundred thousand and more graduates will follow. But you will always be the first. And we share with you today a justifiable pride in your accomplishments. We who remain here have learned much from you and with you. We hope we have imparted to you some of what we learned previously.

People often ask, "Just what is a university?" I would like to venture that a University is an organic entity. That is to say, it's alive, it grows as a unity with increasing diversity. But all of its parts are interconnected, mutually

interdependent, and what affects one, affects all. A university is a place or places where society brings together a group of people who individually and collectively have and share the skills, knowledges attitudes, abilities, ideas and imagination which enable them to purvey the past, analyze the present and predict the future of society. These functions are accomplished through teaching and learning together, through research, evaluation and scholarly inquiry, and through community and public service. A university is people...community, staff and students searching and learning together. If Governors State University becomes truly great it will be because we have such able community support, dedicated, persistent, able, inquiring students, and a faculty that leads by example in thought and in action. We enjoy the beginnings of these ingredients already. As our mix of people increases, as new students and faculty arrive and affect what we've done so far, this University will organically grow and develop. And we will continue to work toward our constant goal: to learn together how to ask increasingly intelligent questions. That's what a university is for...to enable all of us to ask more intelligent, better informed, increasingly wiser and more insightful questions. To pose multiple alternatives and solutions to the problems of man and his cultures. And to act, in life, on the bases of decisions that reflect increasingly mature thought. The real test of the success of Governors State will be how you, our graduates, behave, perform and contribute of yourselves to society now and in the future. Will you make a difference? That will have to be our output measurement in the future.

For those of you who are related to our Governors State University community only peripherally, permit me to share the basic goals of this institution. Goals that were arrived at through the sage advice and council and the hopes and aspirations of hundreds and hundreds of people. Goals that we call "action objectives." Goals that guide the conduct of the work of this University:

Our first goal is Job Efficiency -- every Governors State University student has a right and responsibility to expect that his full engagement in the higher education process will result in the acquisition and-or improvement of marketable skills, attitudes, and values, regardless of whether his occupational-professional goals are immediate or long-range. Ours is an economic society and the road to participation within it and the power to change and improve it widens through higher education. I'm informed that all our graduates have jobs or have been admitted to advanced graduate study. My compliments.

Our second goal is Functional Citizenship -- every student has a right and responsibility to participate directly, or through representation, in those systematic institutionalized policies and practices which affect his life and learning. The University provides an environment of participatory democracy that ensures the student's full engagement in the University. This provides an opportunity to prepare for functioning in a wider community and is an expression of the human right to involve one's self in one's own destiny.

At GSU our third goal is the development of healthy Intra-and Interpersonal Relationships -- we believe that every student has a right and responsibility to develop to his fullest potential. The sense of individual dignity and worth should be cultivated by every action of the University. This requires a learning environment which we think strengthens open, accepting, and understanding human relationships. Since we know that healthy self-concepts evolve in social settings,

recognition of an individual's rights always carries with it the responsibility to recognize and accept the rights of other individuals and groups.

Our last goal is Cultural Expansion -- we believe that every student has a right and a responsibility to seek an appreciation and use of the fine arts and humanities as countervailing forces to depersonalization, and as expanders of human life. The students and University serve each other and the community as culture carriers, studying and reflecting the intricacies, problems, joys, and expressions of all cultures and subcultures.

We further believe that these goals can best be attained in an integrated environment and this we are doing our best to provide. Our commitment to integration is deliberate and visible and it will take the best that is in all of us to realize these goals.

This is what we are about here at GSU.

As you graduates commence this day, please know that we share with you our aspirations and hopes. We all feel "a piece of sad and a piece of glad." You have our finest gift; our love.

Carl Rogers and Barry Stevens said it this way: (paraphrased)

Remove impatience, let thy curiosity
Play lightly over this soft unfolding,
Which is essential to the flower of thyself,
For thyself and thy life and the world and all of us are one.

The poet, Lorenzo Merritt said it another way:

Honesty to one's self and all the love we can carry,
Nothing else in life to seek; for nothing else we tarry.

Good luck dear friends.